

Check Against Delivery

**Address by Mr. Göran LENNMARKER
President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

**15th OSCE Ministerial Council
Madrid, Spain**

29 November, 2007

(Mr. Prime Minister),
Mr. Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairman-in-Office,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure and an honour to address the 15th Ministerial Council and to head the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly to this Council.

This is a special occasion. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was born here in Madrid and this year we have witnessed Spain's Chairmanship of the OSCE, a year during which I have come to know Foreign Minister Moratinos not only as a good colleague but as a friend. I will miss his friendship and support, and I will miss his wise and energetic leadership.

Mr. Minister, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent initiative in organizing the Cordoba Conference on fighting intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that one of the main assets of the OSCE is to be able to discuss issues that affect our citizens reaffirming the relevance of our Organization. Let me also commend you for your efforts to further enhance dialogue and cooperation with our Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

Looking ahead to next year, I am pleased that Spain will continue to be involved in the leadership of the OSCE as part of the OSCE Troika. As Finland takes over the Chairmanship next year, I can assure you that the

OSCE will be in good hands with my good friend, Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, as the new Chairman-in-Office. The Parliamentary Assembly very much looks forward to working closely with him.

This year, the OSCE region and the world in general have faced numerous challenges. Today, more than ever, we must use our organization as an instrument for political dialogue.

OSCE's roles within conflict resolution and in strengthening democracy and human rights and its transatlantic and Central Asia dimensions make it unique and indispensable. We need a strong OSCE to contribute to solving the political, economic and social challenges facing our societies. The OSCE field missions are the heart of this Organization. The Parliamentary Assembly has reiterated that the OSCE must continue making full use of its field presence, providing them with all necessary means to increase their effectiveness.

To maintain and increase its relevance, the OSCE needs to reform and improve its decision making mechanisms. The importance of openness and transparency within the OSCE cannot be emphasized enough. It is important for the OSCE and it is important for democracy. Unfortunately, on the issue of reform that we from the Parliamentary Assembly have called for throughout the years, much work still remains. I urge everyone that cares about the OSCE to dedicate themselves to this vital issue for our organization's future.

Since I first was elected President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in 2006, I have tried to strengthen the role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as an essential OSCE institution. Parliamentarians play an important role in election observation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution as well as in increasing transparency.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is part of the OSCE and contributes to its success, providing visibility and ensuring accountability. The Parliamentary Assembly should be seen as an asset for the OSCE as a whole – to provide assistance to the OSCE in helping solve remaining conflicts and preventing new ones from erupting; increase the respect for human rights; fight against human trafficking; and strengthen OSCE election observation.

The parliamentary dimension is growing within international cooperation. Today, open, confident countries speak with many voices and parliamentarians lend different and important voices to the voices of governments in the capitals.

Members of parliaments pass laws, approve national budgets and taxes, and scrutinize governments. Parliaments and parliamentarians provide valuable

assistance to international co-operation and development. The importance of parliamentary oversight and accountability in international organizations – including the OSCE - is essential as we all try to promote democratic values and democratic ideas throughout the world – we must live as we preach. I am a strong believer in oversight, but I want to underline that it does not mean micromanagement.

For the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly there are at least three important, unfinished tasks: the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. I believe that OSCE should now focus its work on conflict resolution and democracy building in the transitioning democracies in the East. As the only regional organization in which North America, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe are all members, the OSCE is well suited to fulfill this task. In fact, its transatlantic and Central Asian dimensions make it not only unique but also absolutely indispensable.

The countries east of Vienna are full and equal members of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly. We need to hear their voices in our meetings and our discussions. We strongly prefer co-operation and dialogue over isolation and silence. We should intensify a dialogue about common problems and the sharing of experiences and encourage regional cooperation, including trade – a prime motor in creating wealth. As we in Europe reach out eastward, we must also understand the difficulties in building new, independent nations. The completion of that work will not happen overnight.

In July next year, the Parliamentary Assembly will hold its Annual Session in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. We very much welcome the invitation of the Kazakh Parliament, which underlines the importance of Central Asia in the OSCE. The Assembly has supported Kazakhstan's bid for the Chairmanship of the Organization and I encourage this Ministerial Council to take the decision for the Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE (in 2009? / in the near future?)

Election observation is an important part of OSCE's mandate. Since 1993, the OSCE PA has conducted around 85 election observation missions with the participation of 2,400 parliamentarians.

Election observation is important because it helps build democracy. By signing the Copenhagen Document from 1990, all OSCE participating States have agreed that the presence of observers can enhance the electoral process. Indeed, this process has proven so important in the continued development of democracy within the OSCE area and it is vital that the OSCE is allowed to continue this important work.

I will later today leave Madrid for Moscow to head the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation monitoring the Russian State Duma elections on 2 December. I look forward to that task.

Last week, I visited Moscow and met with senior officials in the State Duma, the foreign ministry and the Central Election Mission. I expressed my regret that the Russian authorities have put a limit on the number of international observers. The Russian officials assured us their cooperation and flexibility, and they are now welcoming an enlarged delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly.

The decision to go to Moscow is based on a fundamental principle in which we strongly believe: it is better to engage than to disengage. It is important to meet and discuss and to continue the dialogue, even when we do not agree.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has monitored Russian elections since the first Duma election in 1993. We will now go there with an excellent delegation of senior parliamentarians, many of whom have extensive experience in election monitoring.

The leadership and presence of parliamentary observers at elections during transitional periods emphasize the importance of legislatures as institutions that must provide a balance to executive authority. As parliamentarians, ourselves directly elected public officials, we believe our observations are of great value to the public and to the voters, and that is why we are particularly happy that our parliamentary colleagues from the Council of Europe as well as the Nordic Council will join us on this important mission.

We will go to Russia determined to fulfill our responsibility in accordance with the 1990 Copenhagen Commitments signed by all OSCE participating States and to deliver a fair and impartial assessment of the elections.

Today, Europe is doing well. It is whole and it is free, and it is in peace. Its security is better than ever, its economy is flourishing, and, particularly in its Eastern half, it is growing fast. Democracy and human rights have made dramatic progress since 1989. But in the young nations in the East, terrorism remains a threat and corruption and the lack of rule of law hamper economic progress. And there are still dictatorships in the OSCE area in the 21st Century – we did not expect this 15 years ago. So we still have a big job to do.

We must concentrate our efforts to maintain that spirit of cooperation. The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty must be kept. We should strive for open skies and open military budgets and work for transparency and for

civilian and parliamentary control of the military and security. And the European Union should continue to expand and I am personally in favor of EU membership for Turkey.

And we must continue to try to find peaceful solutions to the unresolved, so-called "frozen" conflicts, in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdnistria, and, yes, Kosovo, all carry high human, economic and political costs.

For almost four years, I have been actively involved in supporting the OSCE Minsk Group's attempts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan about Nagorno-Karabakh. I have emphasized that I see "a golden opportunity" for a peace agreement. I still believe so. A good framework agreement has been presented by the Minsk Group, led by France, Russia and the United States. It is ready to be signed by the leaders of the two countries, if the political will is there. The alternative, a new war, is unthinkable.

There are still dictatorships in the OSCE in the 21st Century, which we did not expect fifteen years ago. Xenophobia and racism is a scourge that must be combated. Terrorism, energy security, transport, trafficking, migration and tolerance and important issues for OSCE.

We in the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly have a lot of work still to do. To be successful, we need to work together and find common solutions. No one wants to return to the dark days of the previous Century.

Thank you.